

COOKING IN THE CAPITAL

A CULTURAL AND CULINARY EXPERIENCE

By Rachel Vachon

Photography By Davies Photography

The evolution of Raleigh's food scene has no doubt been influenced by the outsiders attracted to NC State University, and the Research Triangle Park's draw of employees from all over the country and world. Our capital city is growing and thriving, and continues to welcome new people and businesses, embracing our native Southern food culture and outside influences through the variety of food served. Longtime home to foodies and an evolving restaurant scene, Raleigh continues to bring people together over excellent meals and the creation of complex community connections.

The evidence is with our large pool of chefs – new area chefs, North Carolina natives who left to learn the craft and have boomeranged back to open restaurants, and chefs and food professionals within the city who have been at it a very long time. This last group has witnessed the changing times and food fashions, and survived by their commitment to provide the best food possible to a growing and changing metropolis.

CHEF WALTER ROYAL, ANGUS BARN

On a day-to-day basis, Chef Walter Royal oversees a wide range of cooking responsibilities. He is the executive chef for the Angus Barn and a separate dining area known as the Wine Cellar. There are also two private catering facilities – adjacent to the Angus Barn is indoor/outdoor lakeside catering space the Pavilion, and Durham's American Tobacco District boasts Bay 7; both are available for private events. Additionally he oversees the menu at a concessions stand at the Durham Bulls Athletic Park, which serves the Angus Barn Original Steak Sandwich. At all locations he delights guests with his excellent cuisine.

Since beginning his career over 37 years ago, he's worked in a variety of restaurants. Walter knew he wanted to be a chef since he was a young boy of 14, cooking alongside his mother and grandmother. This early experience inspired him to continue to learn and move forward in his career, attending culinary school in Atlanta before moving to the Triangle and working alongside and training with many of the most influential chefs here.

"I think cooking and being in the restaurant kitchen is in my DNA," Walter says.

An early opportunity he had was to work with Edna Lewis, a chef who authored several books about Southern cooking at Fearrington House Restaurant. Working with Edna Lewis, another African-American chef, allowed Walter to really

dive into the world of cooking, and heavily influenced his cooking abilities and style. He worked alongside Ben Barker there and eventually moved to work with him at Magnolia Grill, continuing later with stints at Bonnie Brae and his own restaurant before landing the top spot at Angus Barn.

Walter's kitchen, one of the largest in the area, is a fun place to work, yet operations often change from day to day. He keeps menus fresh by experimenting with a variety of food cultures and styles together.

"It is a wonderful thing to know you can make people happy through feeding them and educating them about food," Walter says.

His monthly three-hour cooking classes at the Angus Barn are almost always sold out a year in advance; stay posted for openings on the not-yet-posted 2017 schedule, on the Angus Barn website.

JILL SANTA-LUCIA, CATERING WORKS

As a little girl growing up in Fairport, New York, Jill Santa-Lucia was inspired to cook at a young age by her grandmother, who taught her to cook and bake. "My grandmother was an amazing cook and baker; in terms of cooking, she had the most influence on me as a child," Jill says.

As she got older, Jill continued to learn everything she could about cooking, working in restaurants in high school, studying Julia Child's book *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, and learning the aesthetics of displaying food and tables from watching Martha Stewart. Eventually she attended Johnson & Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island and received her culinary degree.

In 1989, with the help of sister Lorin, Jill began a new adventure in Raleigh. "I started Catering Works with the passion to cook and nurture people through my cooking. I love setting a pretty table, and making people feel like they are guests at their own party."

As president and culinary director of Catering Works, she and her team oversee everything

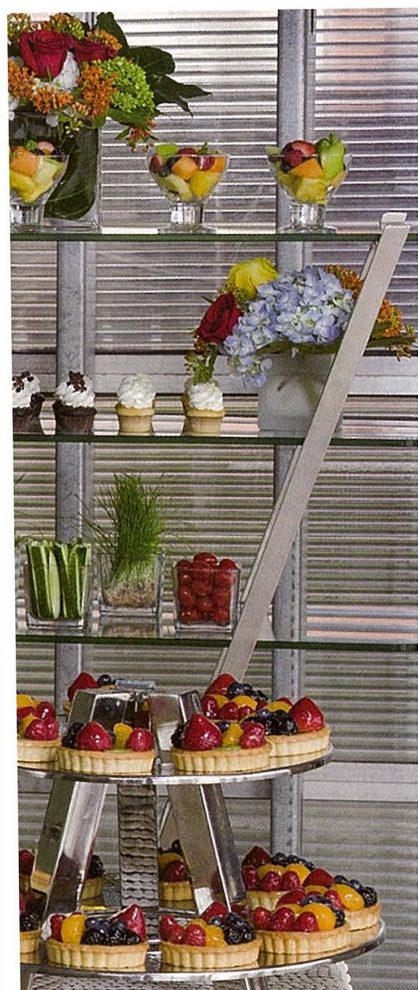


from the cooking and food presentation to personalized menus and event design. She helps clients fulfill their vision for an event and customizes it accordingly, estimating that she feeds, on average, 1,000 people a day.

Jill's heart to care for and nurture people really shines through in her work. Whether it's organizing, planning and producing an event and menu for a client or cooking lunch every day for her employees, she enjoys creating moments that create a sense of connection. She

is also passionate about helping people understand where their food comes from and what ingredients she uses.

Experimenting is also a part of what Jill enjoys about her job, trying recipes that involve uncommon proteins and exotic fruits and vegetables. It is hard to pin down her most special recipe. "For now my favorite dish is a vegetable coconut curry, but next week it could be a fig pizza or anything with figs," Jill says. "One of my all-time favorites is Timpano – it's an all-day process and a show stopper."



She gives full credit for her success to the many people who have helped her and have worked alongside her over the years. "We have been so fortunate to work with great, hardworking, fun people who make it a joy to go to work every day," Jill says. "Also to having loyal customers who have stayed with us through our years of development, trying new recipes and menus, and have given us great feedback to grow. I have a very supportive and understanding family who understands what it takes to have this business. Encouragement goes a long way."

CHEF ANDREW PETTIFER

MARGAUX'S

Chef Andrew Pettifer from Margaux's Restaurant grew up in South London and discovered his enjoyment of cooking while he was in school. Andrew explains that London schools had classes in woodworking, metalworking and home economics. He chose woodworking – as did most of the boys, according to Andrew – but

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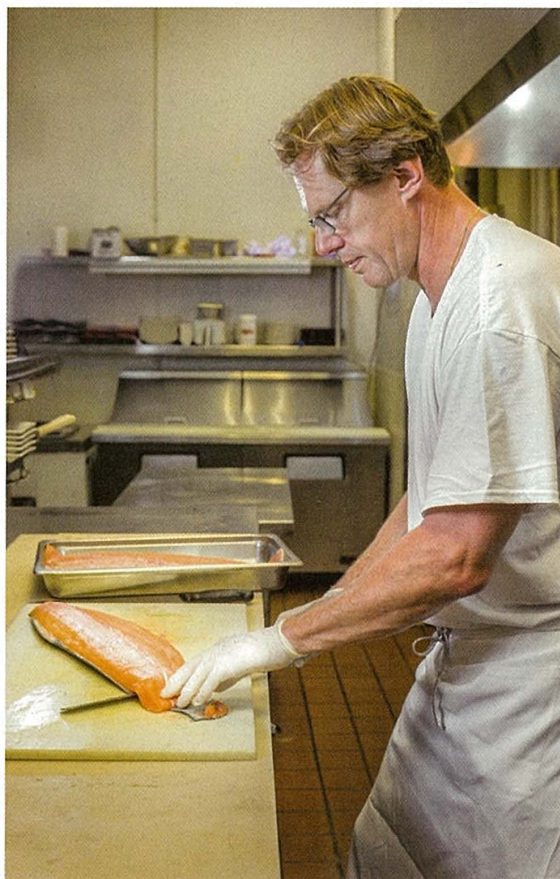
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discovered the trade was not his strong suit and switched to home economics. It was here, at the age of 14, that he learned of his love for cooking. He later went on to college for an apprenticeship in cooking.

Since then, Andrew's training has had a variety of influences, some of which have come through traveling to places such as Bali and Brazil. He even settled in Sydney, Australia for a time to work and continue to improve his skills.

Andrew credits his experience in Australia with being a significant part of getting his grounding and proving his dedication to his craft. While there, he worked as a cook for four days and then went to school on the fifth day, which was paid for by his employer. This allowed him to learn both the technical and cooking aspects of the industry and how to run a business.

As his wife was originally from Raleigh, they moved back to that area in 1996. It was then Andrew began working at Margaux's. When



he joined the staff, Andrew took the all-French menu and turned it into a fusion of French, Southern and Asian foods.

As both co-owner and chef, Andrew oversees the entirety of the back house operations at Margaux's, from working with vendors to planning, organizing and preparing the menu, which changes every day. While Andrew doesn't have a favorite dish to prepare, he does enjoy experimenting when he cooks.

Andrew believes in empowering his staff to cook, to be creative and really gain experience. His kitchen is a fun environment that works together as a team where every member has input.

"I like people to be creative and come up with their own dishes that we work up and put on the menu," Andrew says.

Despite the long hours and tough aspects of running a restaurant at times, Andrew says it is very rewarding and he loves what he does.

"It's a labor of love." ♦

Banana Pudding

PASTRY CREAM

2 cups Milk
¼ tsp Salt
2 TSBP Salted Butter
3 Eggs
½ cup Granulated Sugar
5 TBSP Cornstarch
1 ½ tsp Vanilla Extract

WHIPPED CREAM

2 cups Heavy Cream
¼ cup Confectioner's Sugar
½ tsp Vanilla Extract

ASSEMBLY

4 Bananas, sliced thin
1 box Vanilla Wafers

Pastry Cream

In a heavy saucepan, combine milk, salt, butter and the remaining granulated sugar, bring to a boil. One the milk mixture comes to a boil, lower the heat. In a mixing bowl, whisk the eggs, then add ¼ cup of the granulated sugar and cornstarch and mix/whisk until thoroughly combined. Temper the egg mixture by adding the hot milk mixture in ½ cup increments into the mixing bowl, continue to whisk until most of the milk is incorporated and then pour the contents of the mixing bowl slowly into the saucepan, continue to whisk. Bring the saucepan back up to a boil and whisk constantly for an additional 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the Vanilla. Pour the contents into a

bowl and cover with plastic wrap, allow to cool completely.

Whipped Cream

While the pastry cream is cooling, use a chilled mixing bowl to whip the heavy cream until thickened. Once thickened, whisk in Vanilla extract and sift in the confectioner's sugar, whip until medium peaks form and refrigerate.

Pastry Cream Mousse

When pastry cream is completely cool, whisk well to loosen. Whisk in half of the whipped cream until well combined. Reserve the remaining whipped cream for topping the banana pudding. Refrigerate until ready to use. The above steps can be done up to 2 days before assembly.



To Assemble

Slice bananas thinly. Layer pastry cream mousse in the bottom of a trifle bowl, top with a layer of bananas, and then a layer of the vanilla wafers. Continue for three more layers. Top the banana pudding with the remaining whipped cream.

Makes 10 Servings



CATERING WORKS

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